

who had entered as the bell began its summons to the morning meal, "A New Year's joy to you, good parson," he exclaimed, "may your old purse know less of lightness, and your young heart less of heaviness, than in the fellow whom we buried just nine hours ago."

The person whom he addressed, who appeared to have returned that moment from an early walk, was perhaps three years his senior, not handsome, nor well-clad, and yet a man to be respected, even by a stranger, as one of "heaven's nobility." In William Arnsby even the wordling saw no common intellectual power; while every Christian student of his character beheld in him a noble follower of all that mighty host who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.

"Thanks, Herbert, for these good wishes," was his reply to the doctor's greeting. "I enter on the year with hope and cheerfulness; for the heart will, I think, be lighter, although the purse is not likely to be heavy."

"Why not?" asked his brother hastily. "Your people must be a hypocritical set. Why don't they *prove* their love by giving you another hundred?"

"They are not rich. I knew that when I went amongst them," said the young minister, with generous warmth. "They do what they can, and I am well content, for the wants of a bachelor are few and simple."

"Oh, very well; if you mean to be a 'bachelor,' and live always among a set of grimy artizans, and never rise to fill the position which your abilities *should* command; and if you are 'well content' with such a condition, go on, and bury yourself! I choose a nobler fate."

"Do you?" asked Mrs. Arnsby, from her place beside the urn.

Her husband turned towards her with a gesture of impatience. "Now Jane; you are beginning the year with vinegar," he cried, half laughing, as he rose and rang the bell. "Do I choose a loftier career than this poor country parson? Let my New Year's gifts reply."

As the young physician spoke, a servant entered with the offerings to which he alluded, and the ladies left the breakfast-table to inspect the beautiful evening-dresses in which the taste of the donor was as conspicuous as his liberality. As for the parson,—whose light purse had, by the way, been none the lighter if the price of these costly robes had been within it,—he was too earnest to rejoice in what he saw; too wise to offer an untimely check to the satisfaction which beamed in the three faces before him.

"Julia comes out this year," said Mrs. Arnsby, with a glance at her sister's smiling countenance; "and nothing can be better for her than this pale rose tint.

Ah! Herbert, you are a dear fellow after all!"

"And my career—is it noble?" asked the doctor, with assumed gravity, "or do you prefer the little house by the old chapel down yonder, where (if the parson ever marries) his wife's black silk lasts ten years, and then *turns* 'almost as good as new!'"

The ladies laughed, and even the parson smiled. "Go on, go on, my dear doctor," cried the latter, as he rose and laid his hand on his brother's shoulder. "Death, that great test, of our life's purpose; and *Eternity*, that sequel to all time, shall soon decide between us!" There was a hush as these words passed the lips of him whose new year was to be, at least, no *selfish* period of his history; for the mysterious sounds *Death* and *Eternity* can, rightly spoken, sweep the chords of almost every heart. And when the brothers were alone that morning, the younger proved that he had felt more than he chose to tell.

"You found fault with the purpose of my life this morning," he exclaimed, with affected carelessness, as he waited the arrival of his carriage. "Do you not think it possible that I may be as useful in my profession as you in yours?"

"Quite possible," returned the other, with a look of intense affection—"but pardon me if I say that, looking at your present habits and inclinations, it is *not* quite *probable!*"

"Why not?"

"Herbert, let me speak faithfully. As a physician you have opportunities beyond all price for the benefit both of the bodies and the souls of perishing men around you; but how are you filling your position? What are your motives